

Third Street Pop-Up Mobility Lane

Frequently Asked Questions

OVERVIEW

The downtown Third Street Pop-Up Mobility Lane is a two-week test dedicating the right curbside of traffic to bus, bike and scooter riders only on Third Street from Long Street to Main Street, approaching Mound Street. It will take place during the dates of July 22 – August 2 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday – Friday. This test is an opportunity to solidify best practice approaches in becoming a city with a multimodal transportation system that boasts positive economic impacts, long-term community buy-in and national recognition. The expected outcome is to analyze the data gathered to understand what permanent solutions may be possible or what further tests are appropriate.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact David Miller, Press Secretary, Columbus City Council, dmmiller@columbus.gov or Mindy Justis, Communications Lead, Senior Project Manager, MurphyEpson, mjustis@murphyepson.com.

Q. When will the test start and how long will it last?

A. The test will take place weekdays from July 22 through Aug. 2 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. each day.

Q. Where will the test occur?

A. It will occur on Third Street between Long Street and Mound Street downtown.

Q. Why are the City of Columbus and COTA conducting this test in the first place?

A. This is an exciting concept that's been successful in other cities. It's a quick, low-cost opportunity to test ways to make taking the bus, riding a bike – or scooter – on city streets better. Here's a bit more info: <https://www.boston.gov/news/permanent-bus-lane-be-established-washington-street-rosindale>. We hope you will give it a try and tell us your experience.

Q. Does this test pit bikes and scooters against buses?

A. No, an improved experience for people riding bikes, buses and scooters is expected. During the test hours, on-street parking will be prohibited to make space for an extra wide shared lane exclusively for people riding buses, bikes and scooters. Try it out and tell us your experience.

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Q. Why did the city and COTA choose Third Street instead of another location?

A. There are many factors. First, this is a highly congested area that makes it difficult for all road users – motorists, buses, bikes and scooters – to navigate. At the same time, this means there is a lot of bus, car, bike and scooter data we can collect. The goal is to get a holistic, yet multi-faceted look at how best to use public right-of-way for multiple modes of transportation. Check out this video from a similar test done in Boston: <https://vimeo.com/273912379>. Please give it a try and then let us know your thoughts.

Q. What can drivers expect during this test?

A. Drivers will be prohibited from merging into or entering the lane prematurely when turning right. Right turns will still be permitted at most streets and alleys. Orange cones will separate the lanes, and parking in the lane will be prohibited from 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday during the two-week period. Extra patrols will enforce these restrictions during the test. Buses will no longer need to merge into and out of travel lanes with cars (except at specific locations).

Q. How wide will the test lane be?

A. During the two-week test, riders will travel in an 11- to 12-foot lane. While it would be great to have more space for completely separate bus and bike lanes, it is common in urban locations with heavy use to have 11-foot lanes for shared multimodal travel. See https://bostoncompletestreets.org/pdf/2013/LaneWidths_Chart.pdf for some great guidelines on this. If this test is successful, we may be able to expand the multimodal space with future improvements and with tests in other corridors.

Q. As a person who rides a bike, how should I use the shared bike/bus lane?

A. People riding bikes are encouraged to take the lane and move at a comfortable speed. COTA bus drivers are being instructed not to crowd or pass bicyclists.

Q. What will happen if a bus wants to pass me while I'm riding my bike/scooter?

A. Bus operators are being instructed not to pass people riding bikes or scooters in the lane. Even though buses carry a lot of people on Third Street, they are a very small number of total vehicles. Bike and scooter riders often will be able to use the shared lane by themselves. When buses are in the lane, they will travel at average speeds of 9-10 miles per hour compatible with the pace of bicyclists that currently use the lane.

Q. Can I pass a bus that's stopped?

A. Yes, on its left side, as bike and scooter users currently do on Third Street. Always use caution and look for appropriate gaps in traffic. Traffic cones used to demarcate the lane will be spaced to provide sufficient passing areas. COTA buses flash their hazard lights when picking up passengers and turn on their left turn signal when the bus is about to move. People riding bikes and scooters should allow 3-4 feet of distance when passing other vehicles and should never pass a bus on the right because this presents a danger to riders and transit passengers exiting or boarding the bus.

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In addition, we expect people riding bikes and scooters to have more consistent passing space during the test because buses will be parallel to the curb and traveling in a predictable straight line. Buses will not need to idle at stops for long periods to maintain schedules (as is necessary today), which should minimize the need for a bike or scooter rider to pass.

Q. What are the features of the test that I'll be able to see?

A. On Monday through Friday from July 22 to Aug. 2, orange cones and temporary traffic signals will be placed to separate car travel lanes and the pop-up mobility lane by 2:30 p.m. and removed at 6 p.m. each day. We will designate the area along the curb – where there is some parking and delivery areas regularly – to an 11 to 12-foot travel lane for bus, bike and scooter travel only. There will be no on-street parking allowed. Valets, freight deliveries and rideshare pick-up and drop-off will also be temporarily restricted during the two-week test period.

Q. Why are we allowing buses to use the bike lane?

A. While buses move a lot of people on Third Street, they only make up a small number of total vehicles on Third Street. Bike and scooter riders will often be able to use the pop-up mobility lane by themselves. This test is also intended to address the concerns involved with bicycle and scooter users merging from the bike lane to avoid buses waiting to merge after picking up or unloading passengers, as well as other obstructions like valet stations, freight deliveries, rideshare pick-up and drop-off, and parked car doors. During the test, we will restrict all of the above allowing buses, bikes, and scooters to travel more predictably.

Q. How will parking be affected?

A. All on-street parking and location activities will be restricted from 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Third Street from Long Street to Mound Street downtown. This includes pick-up and drop-off for ride-sharing vehicles. Ride-shares or other quick-stop activities are encouraged to take place on adjacent side streets or alleys.

Q. How does the test make traveling this corridor safer?

A. Other cities have found that allowing buses and bikes to share a dedicated lane can be safer – and more predictable – for both people driving and people biking. Similarly, experiences in other communities have found that transit performance benefits dedicated street space, improving the customer experience for transit users. However, we're going to test these ideas here and see how they work in our community. Scooters are pretty new, of course, so our findings might help other cities learn too.

Q. How will the test make my commute faster/more efficient?

A. Currently, Third Street is one of the city's busiest rush hour corridors where buses weave between lanes to access bus stops, adding to congestion. During the test, cars will be physically separated from the dedicated lane for bus, bike and scooters. This will allow us to test the idea that buses, bikes and scooters traveling in their own dedicated lane provides more consistent and predictable travel conditions for everyone. We'll be eager to hear what you think after you try it – that's how we'll all learn and get better.

Q. Are you shutting down the existing bike lane?

A. No. The area along the curb – where parked cars and delivery areas exist – will be dedicated to an 11- to 12-foot travel lane that will be shared by bikes, buses and scooters only.

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Q. What is being done for enforcement and safety?

A. The city and COTA are all deeply committed to the safety of all roadway users. COTA will provide supplemental operator training on bike/bus interactions in advance of the pop-up mobility test. Bus operators are being instructed not to crowd or pass people riding bikes and scooters. Temporary signage will notify drivers of lane restrictions and appropriate turning locations; orange cones will separate the pop-up mobility lane from car traffic; and special duty parking and traffic enforcement will be onsite for the entirety of the two-week test.

Q. What data is being tested?

A. Metrics will include bus, bike and scooter rider satisfaction and travel time saved; on-time bus service performance; and overall traffic flow. Bus, bike and scooter riders will be interviewed before, during and after the test to learn more about their travel experiences. This will inform potential future tests, to be located either Downtown or in other areas throughout Columbus.

Q. What are the next steps for Third Street after the test?

A. Before making any long-term decisions, the team will first gather data to better inform how we can incorporate multimodal designs into our streets.

Q. What other tests are being planned?

A. This is the first of a series of Mobility Innovation Tests that will take place throughout the city. Details on future tests are still in the works and they will be informed by what is learned in this inaugural test.

Q. Who is involved in this project and who can I contact if I have other questions about the Third Street Pop-Up Mobility Lane?

A. The Third Street Pop-Up Mobility Lane is being carried out by City of Columbus City Council, Columbus Department of Public Service and COTA. You can direct questions to David Miller, Press Secretary, Columbus City Council, dmmiller@columbus.gov. Please also copy Mindy Justis, Communications Lead, Senior Project Manager, MurphyEpson, mjustis@murphyepson.com.



Visit columbus.gov/mobilityinnovation for more information